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AN

ESSAY

ON THE

HOLY SACRAMENT

OF THE

LORD'S SUPPER.

BY PETER WALDO, ESQ.
OF MITCHAM, IN SURRY:
AUTHOR OF
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CHAP. I.

On the Nature, End, and Design of the Holy Communion.

WE read in Mofes's Account of the Creation, that *God created Man in his own Image*, Gen. i. 27. by which we are to underftand, that our firft Parents, Adam and Eve, were created holy and upright, with a perfect Knowledge of their Duty, and a Pow r, through the Divine Bleffing, o perform it. In this Condition they were pla ed in Paradife, in a State of Trial, and no Doubt, in the full Enjoyment of Comfort, Peace, and Happinefs; with a Promife of immortal Life, if they fhould love, honour, and obey their great Creator; but with an exprefs Threatening of Death and Mifery, in Cafe of their Difobedience.

In the Midft of that Plenty of every Thing fit for their Ufe, wherewith God had bleffed them, one Tree only was referved, whe of they were forbidden to eat, as a Teft or Trial of their Obedience. Of this fatal Fruit

Woman (seduced by the Devil in the Form of a Serpent) tasted, and then gave thereof to her husband, and *he did eat*. Thus did they both wilfully transgress a plain and positive Command of their Maker; and by so doing they incurred his most just Displeasure, forfeited all title to his future Favour, and subjected themselves to that Sentence of Death, and all its dreadful Consequences, with which they had been threatened. Thus *Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin*. Hence human Nature became polluted and depraved; and from this Fall of our first Parents we may date all that Wickedness and Corruption, which we read and hear of, and see, in the World, and which we cannot but feel and lament in ourselves. Accordingly we are told that *Adam begat a Son in his own Likeness, after his Image*, Gen. v. 3. that is, with the same corrupt sinful Nature, as his own was now become, and in *his Image*, as being directly opposite and contrary to the *Image of God*, wherein he was at first created.

How wretched and deplorable a State was Man now reduced to! To live only to sin, and suffer the just reward of Sin, Death, and Misery. Dreadful indeed! had not our gracious and merciful God provided a Remedy; and, in pity to lost Mankind, appointed *the Seed of the Woman to bruise the Serpent's Head*. Under this Figure was our blessed Redeemer, (the Son of God, the *Lamb slain from the*

Foundation

Foundation of the World) promised to Adam and his Posterity, to be offered in due Time as a Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World. By virtue of which Sacrifice all Men, from the Beginning to the End of all Things, are entitled to Pardon, and assured of eternal Happiness in the Life to come, on Condition of their Repentance, Faith, and Obedience--*As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* 1 Cor. xv. 22.

Now in order to imprint in the Minds of our first Parents, and of their Posterity after them, a deep Sense of their own Unworthiness, and of God's great Goodness, and to keep up a lively Faith in the promised Redeemer; Sacrifices were appointed, and continued ever after until the Coming of Christ, as a principal Part of religious Worship. By these every faithful Servant of God was instructed in the heinous Nature of Sin, and the Necessity of an Atonement for it: which Atonement was to be made, not by any Virtue or Efficacy in the Sacrifices themselves, but only by that all-sufficient Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross, which these were designed to foreshew and represent. For the same Reason, since the Coming of our blessed Saviour, we Christians are commanded to keep up a constant and grateful Remembrance of what he has done and suffered for us, in the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Bread which we *break* is to remind us of his

 Body

Body having been *broken*, or crucified, for us; and the Wine poured out is to reprefent to us his moft precious Blood, which was fhed for our Redemption, and to make an Atonement for our Sins. And this is undoubtedly the original, and one principal, Defign of the holy Sacrament; *viz.* to be a ftanding Memorial and Reprefentation of our Lord's Death and Sufferings, unto the End of the World. *For* as St. Paul fays, *as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do fhew the Lord's Death, 'till he come:* that is, 'till his fecond Coming to Judgment.

But 2*dly*, it may, and ought to, be confidered as a Sign or Token of prefent Graces; that is, of the gracious Influences of the Holy Spirit, which our Saviour has promifed to all fuch as fhall feek for them by fervent Prayer, and the diligent Ufe of this Sacrament. Of ourfelves we are utterly unable to pleafe God. *In our flefh*, the Scripture tells us, *dwelleth no good thing;* that is, in our natural fallen State we have no Power to do what is good, or avoid what is evil; but *are dead in Trefpaffes and Sins;* yet the fame Scripture affures us, that *we can do all Things through Chrift, that ftrengtheneth us;* that is, we can do all things neceffary to our Salvation, by the Help of the Holy Spirit, given us by Chrift. The Bleffings derived to us from which Spirit are very aptly fignified and reprefented by the Bread and Wine in the Holy Sacrament. For as Bread

Bread is the great Strengthener of our Bodies, and support of our *animal* Life: so does the divine Spirit strengthen and animate our Souls, and maintain us in our *spiritual* Life. As Wine is the sovereign Cordial that revives our Spirits, and invigorates our Bodies; so does the Grace of God comfort and refresh our Souls, and keep us from fainting in our spiritual Warfare against the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

Nor is the Sacrament to be considered only as a Sign or Memorial of the Death and Sacrifice of Christ, and of the Benefits procured us thereby, but also as a Means or Instrument of conveying those Benefits to every faithful and worthy Receiver: (of which I shall treat more fully in the third Chapter.)

Moreover, it may be looked upon as a Pledge, or Earnest, of our future Glory and Happiness; of which indeed we have numberless Promises, throughout the Gospel, from Him who had *the Words of eternal Life*, and whose *Word is Truth*. And that these Promises might make the deeper Impression on us, and be ever fresh in our Minds, he has instituted the holy Sacrament as a Pledge to assure us of his Performance of them *in due Season, if we faint not*. Thus does our blessed Master, by these visible Signs and Tokens, graciously vouchsafe to quicken our Hopes, and animate our Faith, 'till the one shall be lost in Vision, and the other swallowed up in

Enjoyment. For *when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in Part shall be done away.* Then shall the Means of Grace cease; when the End shall be obtained, and the Hope of Glory vanish, when that Glory itself shall be revealed and imparted to us: when we shall enter on our eternal Inheritance of such Blessings as *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of Man to conceive, which God hath prepared for them that love him.* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

From the View we have now taken of the blessed Sacrament, we are naturally led to consider it as a Confirmation of the new Covenant, whereof Christ is the Mediator; being purchased and procured for us by his Death and Sufferings. So our Lord himself tells us: *This Cup*, says He, *is the New Testament*, (or *Covenant*, as it should more properly be rendered) *in my Blood, which is shed for you.* Luke xxii. 20. In this Covenant God is graciously pleased to promise us pardon of our past Sins, present Grace, and future Happiness, on Condition of our hearty Repentance, and sincere Faith and Obedience. Into this Covenant we were first admitted at our Baptism, which is called by St. Peter (in respect to *our* Part of the Engagement) *the Answer of a good Conscience towards God:* wherein we were made *Children of Christ, Heirs of God, and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven.* Now all these great and glorious Privileges, originally conferred on

us in the Sacrament of Baptiſm, are confirmed to us in that of the Lord's Supper on God's Part: at the ſame Time that we renew our Promiſe to fulfil the Conditions required of us on our's.

Laſtly, this holy Sacrament is to be conſidered as a Sign of our Communion and Fellowſhip one with another. For, ſays St. Paul, *we being many are one Bread and one Body; for we are all Partakers of that one Bread*, 1 Cor. x. 17. As all Chriſtians, high and low, rich and poor, make up one Body, of which our Saviour Chriſt is the Head, and one Family, of which he is the Maſter; ſo we are all commanded to eat at one Table, of one Bread, and to drink of one Cup, as a Sign of that mutual Love and Charity, which ought ever to ſubſiſt among us, and without which he will never own us, as his Members or Servants.

To ſum up what has been ſaid in a few Words—This holy Sacrament, (which is indeed the great Token and Badge of our Chriſtian Profeſſion) was inſtituted to repreſent, and put us in continual Remembrance of that all-ſufficient Sacrifice of Chriſt upon the Croſs; which is the Foundation of all our Hopes of Pardon and Happineſs. It was deſigned to ſignify to us the Efficacy and Neceſſity of the Holy Spirit of God, to aſſiſt us in our Duty, and enable us to work out our Salvation. It was alſo appointed as a principal Means of convey-

ing these Benefits to us; and as a Pledge to assure us of our future Glory, and eternal Life. Lastly; in this sacred Ordinance we renew the Covenant entered into at our Baptism, and certify our Love and Charity towards one another.

CHAP. II.

On the Necessity of our receiving the Sacrament in order to our Salvation.

THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME, Luke xxii. 19. These Words of our blessed Saviour (spoken when he first instituted the Sacrament, and was going to die for our Sins) do certainly shew the Necessity of our receiving it, better than all other Arguments whatsoever. For here is a plain and positive Command of Him, who has an undoubted Right to command us; of our great Master and Redeemer, our Lord and our GOD. And that it was intended to be of perpetual Force and Obligation to the End of the World, appear very plainly from what follows in St. Paul's Account of the Institution (which he received by immediate Revelation from Christ himself) where he says; *After the same Manner also he took the Cup, when he had supped, saying, This Cup is the New Testament in my Blood: this do ye*, as oft *as ye drink it, in Remembrance*

Remembrance of Me: For as often *as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death 'till he come,* 1 Cor. xi. 25, 26. These Words also plainly shew, that the holy Sacrament was to be received *often:* and so the Disciples and first Christians certainly understood them, as they made it a constant Part of their religious Worship. Accordingly we read in the Acts of the Apostles, Ch. ii. 42. that *They continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and in* BREAKING of BREAD (that is, receiving the Sacrament) *and in Prayers.* Indeed, in those early Ages a Man would have been looked upon as no Christian, who refused to join in the Holy Communion. And let us remember, my dear Brethren, that the very same Obligation lies upon *us* as did upon *them.* We have all one Saviour *Jesus Christ; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.* But let me ask—can we hope to be saved by him, while we live in wilful and open Disobedience to one of his Commands?—Can we expect to partake of the Benefits of his Sacrifice, while we refuse to remember it in the Manner he himself has appointed?—Let us not deceive ourselves: If we will enter into Life, we must keep the Commandments.—Our Obedience must be *general;* to *all* the Precepts of the Gospel, without Exception.—*Whosoever,* says St. James, *shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, is guilty of* all. Now Christ has ordained two Sacraments in

his Church, and strictly commanded us to observe them, as Means of Grace, and Conditions of our Salvation. These are Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. They are therefore necessary on two Accounts; as Means of Grace, that is, of procuring and applying to us the Benefits of our Saviour's Death, and the Assistance of his Holy Spirit; and likewise as being his express and positive Commands. You all observe one of these Sacraments, Baptism; and so far you do well: you think it necessary; and doubtless it is so.—Why then will you not observe the other, which is equally commanded, and therefore equally necessary?—Besides; consider the great Difference between the Case of a Child unbaptized, and that of a grown Person who never receives the holy Communion.—It is not the *Fault* of the Child, but his *Misfortune*, that he is not admitted into the Christian Covenant.—He has no actual Sin to answer for.—Whereas, if you neglect to remember your Saviour, and to confirm your Part in that Covenant, as He has commanded, the Fault is *wholly yours*, you sin wilfully; and surely you must tremble, if you think of the Consequence. For as our duty in this Case is plain and clear, if we obstinately persist in our Disobedience to our gracious Redeemer, we infallibly forfeit his Favour; do in Effect renounce our Christianity, *denying the Lord that bought us*; and shall find, I fear, when it is too late, that to *us* CHRIST IS DEAD IN VAIN.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

On the Benefits arising from a frequent and devout Attendance on the Lord's Supper.

HAVING, I hope, fully convinced you of the Neceffity of receiving the Sacrament in order to your Salvation, I fhould think it almoft needlefs to add any Thing to perfuade you to a frequent and devout Attendance on it. However, fince our Religion in general, and every Act of it in particular, is a *reafonable Service*, and *Godlinefs is profitable unto all Things*; it may be proper, as a further Motive and Encouragement, to fhew you the Reafonablenefs and Ufefulnefs of this Duty, by laying before you the great Benefits arifing from a due Performance of it.—And firft, we may well apply this to what the Pfalmift fays of God's Laws in general, Pfalm xix. 11. that *in keeping of them there is great Reward.* As fure as God is true, fo furely will he reward thofe who obey his Commands; generally in this Life, with that Comfort and Peace of Mind, which the World cannot give; and certainly with eternal Joy and Happinefs in the Life to come. But to be more particular—The Benefits of a devout Attendance on the Holy Communion are many and various. The firft and principal is, it's being a Means of conveying to us the Bleffings obtained

tained by the Death and Sacrifice of Christ; according to that memorable Saying of St. Paul, 1 Cor. x. 16. *The Cup of Blessing, which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?* Which Words are generally understood to signify, that, by a faithful and devout Participation of the Bread and Wine in the Lord's Supper, we do indeed partake of his most blessed Body and Blood, which they are designed to represent; that is, of all those spiritual Blessings procured for us by his Body broken, and his Blood shed for our Sakes: Then (as our Church expresses it, almost in the very Words of Scripture) "we spiritually eat the Flesh of Christ and "drink his Blood; we dwell in Christ, and "Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and "Christ with us." Then are our Souls fed and nourished with their proper Food and Sustenance; as necessary for them, as Bread is for the Support of our Bodies. Then, being united to Christ, our Head, we become, in some sense, *Partakers of a Divine Nature*, receiving from him such Communications of the Holy Spirit, as he sees needful for us, to help our Infirmities, and enable us to perform our Christian Duty. Accordingly, the Apostle says, 1 Cor. xii. 13. *We have all been made to drink into one Spirit*—plainly alluding to our drinking of the Wine in the holy Sacrament. And, indeed, if even to private Prayer our

Saviour

Saviour has annext a Promife, that *his Heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him*, Luke xi. 13; and if all public Devotions, being of divine Appointment, have a greater Affurance of God's Bleffing attending them, how much more, in this moft folemn of all religious Actions, may we expect that he will gracioufly vouchfafe us the bleffed Influences of his Holy Spirit? Not that we are to judge of them (I moft earneftly intreat you to remember) by any inward Feelings or rapturous Tranfports (as Enthufiafts vainly boaft, thereby deceiving themfelves and others) but by the Effect of an holy Life, and an Improvement in all Chriftian Graces and Virtues. Thefe are the *Fruits* of the *Spirit*; (fee Gal. v. 22.) thefe are the only fure Signs of our having received it, and being under it's holy Direction: And thefe Fruits it will infallibly produce in us, if we are conftant and diligent in ufing the appointed Means of obtaining them; which are Prayer, and the Holy Sacrament.

But befides thefe fpiritual Benefits of a frequent and devout Attendance at the Lord's Table, there are others which flow from it in a natural Way; as it tends to raife and cherifh in our Minds pious Thoughts, and devout Affections; to infpire us with a Love of God; to keep us ftedfaft in our Faith in Chrift; and to give us a juft Hatred and Abhorrence of all Sin and Wickednefs. The Love of God is the nobleft Principle of our Obedience: It is called

called by our bleſſed Saviour *the firſt and great Commandment*. And what can be ſo natural and likely to raiſe this Love in us, as the Conſideration of that great and aſtoniſhing Inſtance of his Love to us, in ſending his only Son into the World, to die for our Sins, and to make us Heirs of eternal Life?—*Herein is Love*, ſays St. John; *not that we loved God, but that he loved us*—And again: *We love him, becauſe he firſt loved us*.* Now as often as we receive the Pledges of his Love in the Holy Communion, we have there ſet before us the ſtrongeſt Motives that can be to Love and Gratitude on our Parts; which ſurely cannot fail to make ſuitable and laſting Impreſſions in the Breaſt of every faithful Communicant.—The frequent Uſe of this Ordinance muſt likewiſe naturally confirm and eſtabliſh us in a lively Faith in Chriſt, who is therein, as it were, ſet forth crucified before us; an humble Reliance on his Merits, which we there plead to our heavenly Father, and a ſteady Hope of Salvation through him, whom we commemorate as our only Redeemer. It muſt alſo give us the ſtrongeſt Hatred and Deteſtation of Sin, when we reflect, that no leſs an Expiation than the Sacrifice of the Son of God was neceſſary to atone for the Sin of his fallen Creatures.—In ſhort, every Sentiment of Humility and Devotion, every Diſpoſition to Piety and Goodneſs, is naturally excited in us by a frequent Attendance on the holy Sacrament.—It raiſes

our

our thoughts from Earth to Heaven; and by reminding us where our *true Treasure* is, there it causes our *Hearts* to be also.—Lastly, it is a perpetual Source of Comfort to us under all our Miseries and Afflictions, as it fixes our Minds on another and better Life, to which this is but a Passage: on that heavenly Country to which we belong: *Where God shall wipe away all Tears from our Eyes: and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain: For the former Things* shall be *passed away.* Rev. xxi. 4.

Such are the Benefits arising from frequent and devout Communion: which Benefits, I beg you to observe, are plainly intended for us during our Progress through Life, and not at the Hour of Death: when this sacred Ordinance can be of little or no Use, nor afford any solid Comfort, to those that have lived in the constant Neglect of it. It is an holy and virtuous Life, not a Death-bed Repentance, that God requires of us: and which, for the Sake of the Merits of Christ, he will reward with Life everlasting. We must therefore REMEMBER OUR CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF OUR YOUTH, and persevere in a steady and uniform Course of Obedience to Him to the End of our Lives, if we hope to be saved. And in order to *remember* and obey him as we ought, we must be constant and diligent in the Use of those Means of Grace, which he has mercifully afforded us: particularly in our Attendance on the

the Lord's Supper.—Let us now enquire what Qualifications are neceſſary on our Parts, to fit us for a due Performance of this Duty, and to entitle us to all theſe Advantages.

CHAP. IV.

On the Qualifications neceſſary to make us worthy Communicants.

IN general, whoever is fit to pray or to join in the common Service of the Church, is fit to receive the holy Sacrament. An Heart properly diſpoſed for Prayer is doubtleſs at the ſame Time properly qualified for every other Act of religious Worſhip: And there is no Qualification requiſite for the due Receiving of the Lord's Supper, which is not as neceſſary for the due Performance of Prayer. Let us then enquire what theſe Qualifications are, and apply them to each Duty reſpectively. We may reckon them up, I think, under the four following Heads, *viz.* 1*ſt*, An humble penitent Heart,—2*dly*, A firm and ſincere Reſolution of Amendment and Obedience—3*dly*, A ſtedfaſt and lively Faith in God's Mercy through Chriſt, with hearty thankfulneſs for his Death—and, *laſtly*, Love and Charity towards all men. To conſider them each in their Order.

Humility I look upon as the Ground-work of all. Now by Humility I do not mean what is commonly underſtood by it, as it reſpects our Behaviour towards one another (though in that Senſe indeed it is a very important Part of Chriſtian Duty) but by Humility, as the Word is generally uſed in Scripture, is to be underſtood that humble Diſpoſition of the Heart towards God, that Lowlineſs of Mind, that Poverty of Spirit which is ſo eſſential to true Piety, and ſo diſtinguiſhing a Mark of a good Chriſtian. It conſiſts in a deep Senſe of our own Unworthineſs, of our natural Proneneſs to Sin, and averſion to Holineſs, and of our utter Inability of ourſelves to pleaſe God. It is, in the Language of Scripture, that broken Heart and contrite Spirit, of which ſo many excellent Things are ſpoken, and to which ſo many gracious Promiſes are annext, both in the Old and New Teſtament—*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken Heart, and ſaveth ſuch as be of a contrite Spirit.* Pſ. xxxiv. 18. *The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit; a broken and contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not deſpiſe.* Pſ. li. 17. Again the Prophet *Iſaiah*, ſpeaking in the Perſon of Chriſt ſays; *The Lord hath anointed me to preach good Tidings unto the Meek, he hath ſent me to bind up the broken hearted*—Iſ. lxi. 1. And, *To this Man will I look, ſays the Lord, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.* Iſ. lxvi. 2. Agreeably to

to these Declarations, our blessed Lord begins his Sermon on the Mount with the same Doctrine—*Blessed*, says he, *are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* Matt. v. 3. And both St. *James* and St. *Peter* (referring to a Passage in the Proverbs, Ch. iii. 34.) assure us, that *God resisteth the Proud, but giveth Grace unto the Humble.* It is this same Humility and its opposite, spiritual Pride, which are so strongly marked out to us in that most striking and instructive Parable of the Pharisee and Publican. (*Luke* xviii. 10.) The former, trusting in his own Righteousness, proud of his Attainments, and boasting of his Merits, was rejected, and his Prayers refused Admission: while the humble Publican, conscious of his Unworthiness, confessing his Sins, and relying wholly on God's Mercy and Goodness, was graciously accepted.—Nearly allied to Humility is Penitence: Indeed they may be looked upon as inseparable. For whoever has his Mind deeply impressed with a Sense of his Sins, will naturally be sorry for them, and lament them before that Being, who alone can help him: With *David* he *will acknowledge* his *Transgressions*, if his *Sin is ever before him.*—From what has been said, and indeed from the whole Tenor of the Sacred Writings, it appears how indispensably necessary an humble penitent Heart is to make our Prayers acceptable to God; and it is no less plain, how peculiarly needful it is to make us fit for the Holy

Communion,

Communion, which is intended to set before us, in the strongest light, the Wretchedness of our Condition by Nature, to remind us of our manifold Sins, and to convince us of the Necessity of a Redeemer in order to our Pardon and Salvation.

2. The second necessary Qualification is a firm and sincere Resolution of Amendment and Obedience: For we must not only *cease to do Evil*, but *learn to do well*. This is indeed the natural Effect, and genuine Fruit, of *godly Sorrow*; this is that true Repentance, of which the Scripture speaks, *not to be repented of*: without which all Confession of Sin would be no more than an empty Form, and all our Prayers a Mockery of God, and downright Hypocrisy—*The Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to the Lord: but the Prayer of the Upright is his Delight.* Prov. xv. 8.—No less necessary is the same Resolution of Amendment and Obedience to make us worthy Partakers of the Holy Sacrament. For in vain do we plead his Merits, who came to destroy the Works of the Devil, (that is, all Sin and Wickedness) for the Pardon of our past Offences, unless we are fully determined to forsake them for the future: in vain do we use those Means of Grace to assist us in all Holiness and godly Living, unless we firmly resolve to join our own hearty Endeavours, for the same Purpose, and thereby to *work out our own Salvation.*

3. But

3. But since our best Actions are imperfect, and of themselves can never entitle us to the divine favour; since *in many Things we offend all*, and shall continue to be more or less Sinners, so long as we live in this frail State; there is another most necessary Qualification to render our Prayers, as well as our Communion acceptable to God; which is a stedfast and lively Faith in his Mercy through Christ.—*Without Faith*, says the Apostle to the Hebrews, *it is impossible to please him: For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Heb. xi. 6. And St. *James*, speaking of Prayer, says—*Let him ask in Faith, nothing wavering.* Ja. i. 6. But Faith in God's Mercy *in general* is not sufficient: It must be Faith in his Mercy *through Christ*, that will make the Worship of Christians acceptable; for *in him he has reconciled the world unto himself, and through him alone we have peace with God.*—He is our Sacrifice, our Mediator and Advocate; the Foundation of our Faith, our Hope and Confidence.—*I am*, says our blessed Lord, *the Way, the Truth, and the Life: No man cometh unto the Father but by me.* John xiv. 6. *I am the Door: by me if any Man enter in, he shall be saved.* John x. 9. This Faith therefore is the very Essence of Christianity; and is necessary to make our Prayers acceptable, as they must be offered up in the Name, and through the Mediation, of Christ; and to make us worthy

Partakers

Partakers of the holy Sacrament, wherein we profeſs to rely wholly on God's Mercy through our ſaid gracious Redeemer. To this Faith hearty Thankfulneſs muſt be added. Indeed if our Faith be ſincere, it will naturally accompany it. For ſurely whoever ſtedfaſtly believes in this aſtoniſhing Inſtance of God's Love, ſhewn us in our Redemption, cannot but feel and expreſs the warmeſt Sentiments of Gratitude and Adoration.

Thankſgiving is a very material and principal Part of Chriſtian Devotion at all Times, and in all Places; but more particularly ſo, when we are commemorating the Mercies of God in the holy Sacrament. For which Reaſon this Office is very properly and emphatically ſtyled by ancient Writers, the *Eucharist*; which ſignifies the giving of Thanks; as our Church calls it. "Our ſacrifice of "Praiſe and Thankſgiving." And certainly to join in it without a thankful Heart, can be no better than a mocking of God, and an Inſult on our bleſſed Redeemer.

4. The fourth and laſt Qualification I am to conſider, is that love of Charity towards all Mankind; a moſt extenſive and neceſſary Duty, to which we are particularly bound by our holy Religion, and without which we are told that all our other Doings will be *nothing worth*. The Love of God and of our Neighbour indeed are the Sum and Subſtance of all Religion; *on theſe two Commandments*, ſays our Saviour,

Saviour, *hang all the Law and the Prophets.* Matt. xxii. 40. And to pretend to one without the other, is vain and hypocritical; for the Scripture tells us; *If any Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar.* 1 John iv. 20. The nature of this Love, and the particular Duties flowing from it, and comprehended under it, together with our Obligations to the Practice of them, are plainly and clearly set forth to us throughout the whole New Testament. Our blessed Lord makes it the distinguishing Mark of a true Christian: *By this,* says he, *shall Men know, that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another.* John xiii. 35. And one grand Branch of it the Forgiveness of our Enemies, he has particularly insisted on, in that excellent Prayer he has taught us, wherein he has made it the express Condition of our asking and obtaining Forgiveness of our Sins at the Hand of God. *If,* says he, *ye forgive Men their Trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not Men their Trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your Trespasses.* Matt. vi. 14, 15. To the same Purpose is the Parable of the merciless Servant, delivered in the 18th Chapter of St. *Matthew.* In short, nothing can be more clear and evident than the Necessity of universal Love and Good-will, to make our Prayers and Devotions in general acceptable to Almighty God. And as his Love to us, in sending his Son into the World

to die for our Sins, is urged as the grand Motive to us to love one another, (*Beloved; if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another,* 1 John iv. 11.) surely when we commemorate that Love in the holy Communion, we are more particularly bound to bring with us Hearts full of Love and Goodwill towards our Brethren.

As to the Necessity of Reconciliation with our Enemies, before we join in this sacred Ordinance, let us remember our Saviour's Admonition in his Sermon on the Mount, *Matt.* v. 23, 24. *If thou bring thy Gift to the Altar, and there rememberest that thy Brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy Gift before the Altar, and go thy Way; first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift.* It may indeed so happen, that all men are not actually at Peace with us: we may have Enemies unwilling to be reconciled. But if that is owing to their own Obstinacy and Perverseness, and not to any Backwardness on our Part, it should not give us any Disturbance, or hinder us from communicating. We are only to answer for ourselves. If then we are hearty and sincere in our Love and Goodwill to all Men, forgiving our Enemies, and doing them good, when fit Opportunities offer; if we make Amends and Restitution, to the utmost of our Power, to all those whom we have injured or offended; in short, if we love, not in Word only, but in Deed and in Truth; then are we

so far properly qualified to partake of the Pledges of God's Love in the Holy Sacrament.

You see now what are the Qualifications absolutely necessary to make our religious Duties of every Kind acceptable at the Throne of Grace. Let us therefore frequently *search and try our Hearts*, in order to know if we are possessed of them. Self-Examination is by no Means so laborious and difficult a Task as some may imagine: and the oftener we perform it, the easier it will be. It is useful and proper at all Times; but more particularly so, before we go to our public Devotions, or to the Sacrament.—*Let a Man examine himself*, says St. Paul, *and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup*. 1 Cor. xi. 28. And the same Rule may very properly be applied to public Worship in general; to which no one should go careless or unprepared. Let us then examine our Consciences honestly and fairly, in regard to the Qualifications above mentioned; and we can never be at a Loss to know, whether we are fit to pray, or fit to communicate. In this Preparation, you see, there is nothing tedious, or difficult, or puzzling, or terrifying: it is, in short, no other than that of an honest humble Heart; a Disposition to believe, and live like a Christian.

As to such pious Persons, as have much spare Time on their Hands, and chuse to spend a large Portion of it in private Medita-

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tion and Prayer, before they go to the Sacrament. God forbid! that I ſhould diſcourage them from ſo uſeful an Employment. But though it may be uſeful, and in ſome Caſes expedient, it is by no Means neceſſary in general. The Scripture does not enjoin it. Let me then earneſtly adviſe and entreat ſuch among you, as are in Buſineſs or Service, and have not much Time at Command, never to make that an Excuſe for not coming to the Holy Sacrament. Diligence and Induſtry in our reſpective Callings, ſo far from being an Hindrance, is of itſelf an excellent Preparative both [illegible] praying and communicating as we ought; [illegible] is a main Part of our Duty, to be well employed, and keeps us out of many Temptations, to which the Idle are expoſed. And be aſſured, that the longeſt formal Preparations will avail nothing, in the midſt of an uſeleſs and miſ-ſpent Life. For to be truly devout and religious, is not to be ſo by Fits and Starts, and on particular ſolemn Occaſions; but regularly, conſtantly, and uniformly. In a Word, whoever is humble and penitent, and endeavours to do his Duty to the beſt of his Power, truſting in God's Mercy through Chriſt, and living in perfect Love and Charity with all Men; that is, whoever is a ſincere Chriſtian, is at all Times prepared for every Part of Chriſtian Worſhip, is always fit to pray, and fit to receive the Sacrament. On the other Hand, a wicked impenitent Perſon

is equally unfit for both: His Prayers will be an Abomination unto the Lord, and by going to the Holy Communion he will only add Sin to Sin. Unleſs he repent, his Caſe is truly deſperate; he is neither fit to live, nor fit to die.

CHAP. V.

Objections conſidered and anſwered.

TWO Objections, often urged a[illegible]ſt going to the Lord's Supper, are in Fact anſwered already. The one is, that it is not a neceſſary Duty—the other, that it is a Work of great Difficulty, and requires more Time to prepare for it properly than moſt Perſons can beſtow. Now I have ſhewn you from Scripture, that it is abſolutely neceſſary, being an expreſs Command of our bleſſed Saviour to all Chriſtians without Exception. I hope too I have convinced you, that the Examination, or Preparation, required before-hand, is by no Means a Work of much Time or Difficulty: So theſe Objections vaniſh of courſe. But it may be objected further, that it is a Duty attended with great Danger; becauſe St. *Paul* ſays, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himſelf, not diſcern-*

ing the Lord's Body. 1 Cor. xi. 29. Now before I explain this Paſſage, let me only beg your Attention to a plain Queſtion or two. Do you think that God Almighty would give you any Command, which it would be dangerous for you to obey? Do you imagine he would lay Snares or Stumbling-blocks in your Way? or that he would enjoin a Duty as neceſſary to Salvation, and make your Performance of that Duty expoſe you to Damnation? I appeal to yourſelves, if this be not too ſhocking, and even blaſphemous, to ſuppoſe. God forbid we ſhould entertain ſuch a Thought of our merciful and gracious Creator!—But let us proceed to examine the Paſſage in St. *Paul*, and the Objection, I am perſuaded, will be eaſily removed. The Caſe of the *Corinthians*, to whom he was writing, was very particular, and quite different from any that can happen in our religious Aſſemblies. It was uſual in thoſe Times to have what they called their Feaſts of Charity accompany the Celebration of the Lord's Supper: Of which Feaſts all Chriſtians, of every rank and Condition, were to partake without Diſtinction; only with ſtrict Temperance and Moderation. Now the *Corinthians* had groſsly abuſed this pious and benevolent Inſtitution; firſt, by ſhutting out the Poor (for whoſe Benefit it was principally deſigned) and then by eating and drinking to Exceſs: So that they were guilty of two great Crimes; want of Charity, and Intemperance.

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And to increaſe their Guilt, they partook of the Holy Communion in a moſt riotous and diſorderly Manner, without conſidering the Nature and Importance of the Buſineſs they were engaged in, or indeed without diſtinguiſhing it from a common Feaſt. This was ſuch a ſhocking Abuſe and Profanation of this moſt ſacred Ordinance of Religion, as muſt ſurely make every ſerious Chriſtian tremble to think of: This was, in the ſtricteſt Senſe, *not diſcerning the Lord's Body*. And as all Sin ſubjects Men to the Wrath and Puniſhment of God, ſo they who were guilty of this might properly be ſaid to *eat and drink their own Damnation*. But it ſhould be obſerved, that the Word, which we tranſlate, *Damnation*, ſignifies in the Original, *Judgment*, or *temporal Condemnation*; as appears from what the Apoſtle adds in the very next Verſe; *For this Cauſe many are weak and ſickly among you, and many ſleep*; that is, many among you have been puniſhed by various Diſeaſes, and many by Death: (for that is here meant by *ſleeping*.)

I hope now you are fully ſatisfied, that there is no Danger of our receiving the Sacrament unworthily, in the ſame Manner that the *Corinthians* did. But you may aſk, may we not ſtill receive it unworthily, in ſome other Senſe? —Undoubtedly we may; and take Notice alſo, that in like Manner we may pray unworthily. Whoever does either careleſsly, inconſiderately, or irreverently, does it unworthily.

Much

Much more, whoever lives unworthy of his holy Profession, in the habitual Practice of any Sin, or the Neglect of any Duty, if he presume to enter the House of God, or approach his Altar, does in the highest Sense pray, or communicate, unworthily; and will thereby most assuredly increase his Condemnation. Let such therefore keep away both from Church and the Sacrament, till they have humbled themselves, with hearty Sorrow, for their Sins; and by unfeigned Repentance and Reformation made themselves meet to join in the Congregation of the Faithful.

But let not the honest and sincere Christian be afraid, where no Fear is. Let him not refrain from doing his Duty at God's holy Table, because he is fearful he shall not do it so well as he ought. Let him remember, that the best of our Services are imperfect. Let him but do it as well as he can; and rest assured that God's Goodness, and our Saviour's Merits, will supply what is wanting on his Part. Trusting in these, let him go boldly to the Throne of Grace; and he will not fail to be graciously received.

Of ourselves indeed we are not worthy of the least of God's Mercies, much less of the great Blessings tendered to us in the Holy Sacrament. We are not worthy of the Air we breathe, or of the Food we eat. But are we therefore to refuse to live, or refuse to eat? Or not to accept of God's Bounty and Goodness,

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becaufe we are undeferving of them? If this is evidently abfurd in all other cafes, why is it not equally fo in regard to our receiving the Sacrament?—Befides, the very Nature of this Duty implies our Unworthinefs; and an humble Senfe of our Unworthinefs is a main Qualification for performing it as we ought. Had Mankind continued holy and innocent, there had been no Need of any Redemption, no Sacrifice on the Crofs, no Sacrament: It was for Sinners that Chrift died, and inftituted this Remembrance of his Death and Paffion. Unworthy of this amazing Goodnefs we certainly are, even, the very beft of us; but that is no Reafon we fhould not moft humbly and thankfully accept it, when offered to us. On the contrary, HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE, IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT SALVATION? if we neglect to ufe thofe Means, which God has appointed for our Improvement in all virtuous and godly Living.

I proceed now to confider fome other Objections, which are indeed very weak and frivolous, and yet, I am afraid, keep many Perfons away from the Holy Communion. The firft I fhall mention relates to the lower Set of People, who feem to have a very miftaken Notion, that it is a Duty which belongs only to the Wife and Learned, the Rich and Great, and which the Poor have no Concern in; nay, that it would be a Kind of Prefumption in them to join in it. But, furely, nothing can

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be more foolish; or more directly contrary to Scripture and Reason, than this Supposition. For are we not expresly told, that *There is no Respect of Persons with God? that He regardeth not the Rich more than the Poor; for they all are the Work of his hands?* Job xxxiv. 19. Have we not all the same Creator, the same Redeemer, the same Sanctifier? Have we not been all baptized into one Faith: in the same ever blessed Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? And are we not then all equally intitled, and equally obliged, to eat of the same Bread, and drink of the same Cup, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Look into your Bibles; you will find there no Privileges or Benefits annexed to Riches and Grandeur. On the contrary, our blessed Saviour often warns us of the Danger attending them, by their leading us into many Temptations, which Poverty is not exposed to: And it is very remarkable, that in his Answer to the Disciples of *John* the Baptist, speaking of his divine Mission, he says, that *the Poor have the Gospel preached unto them:* Neither have worldly Wisdom or Learning any Promises made them in holy Scripture. We are there told, that *the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom,* and *to depart from Evil is understanding.* Job xxviii. 28. And that to *know Jesus Christ, and him crucified,* is the only saving and valuable Knowledge. And St. *Paul* writing to the *Corinthians,* says: *For ye see your Calling, Brethren,*

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how that not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 1 Cor. i. 26. *For the Wisdom of this World is Foolishness with God.* 1 Cor. i. 20. In short, there is no Person so mean and low, so poor and ignorant, but what may know, and do, all that is necessary to his Salvation, as well as the greatest, and richest, and wisest Man living.

True Religion lies in the Heart, and shews itself in the Fruits of a holy and virtuous Life; not in worldly Wisdom or Learning, much less in Pomp or Splendour. He that is *poor in Spirit*, and *rich in Faith and good Works*, let his Condition in Life be what it will, he only is the good Christian, and will not fail to be accepted of God here, and eternally rewarded by him hereafter. Whoever therefore is meet for the Kingdom of Heaven, is certainly fit to join in every Act of religious Worship here on Earth: so that there is no more Reason for you to refrain from the Sacrament on Account of your Poverty, or low State of Life, than from Prayer, or from coming to Church. To plead such Excuses, is foolish and wicked: To expect to be saved, without using the Means of Salvation which God has appointed, is indeed the Height of Presumption. But let your Condition be never so low, there can be no Presumption in your receiving the Sacrament, if with an honest and humble Heart, and steady Faith, you endeavour to do your Duty in that State to which God has called you.

Another

Another very weak Excufe, pleaded by fome, efpecially by young Perfons, for a Neglect of this Duty is, that they don't care to be fingular or particular. "The generality of People, fay they, of our Age, and in our Condition, never go to the Sacrament; and why fhould we?"—Good God! Are you then afraid or afhamed of being particular in doing your Duty? Or do you regard Men more than God?—The Scripture tells us, we muft not *follow a Multitude to do Evil.* Exod. xxiii. 2. For the fame Reafon, we muft not follow a Multitude to omit doing what is good. In a plain Cafe where our Duty is clear, as it is here, to follow bad Examples, will be no Excufe for us; and if a falfe Shame makes any of you refrain from coming to God's Holy Table, let me beg of you ferioufly to reflect on thofe awful Words of our bleffed Saviour, and to keep them conftantly in your Minds: *Whofoever*, fays he, *fhall be afhamed of me and of my Words in this adulterous and finful Generation, of him alfo fhall the Son of Man be afhamed, when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.* Mark viii. 38.

The laft Excufe I fhall mention for not communicating, is, that it is looked upon by fome to be a Duty of fo ferious and folemn a Nature, as not to be confiftent with a lively Temper, and cheerful Difpofition. But this is a great Miftake; proceeding from a very wrong Notion of Religion in general, and of

this Duty in particular. God's Commandments *are not grievous.* Whenever we addreſs ourſelves to Him, either in public or private, whether in the common Service of the Church or in the Sacrament, we cannot be too ſerious and devout: It would certainly be a great Degree of Profaneneſs to be otherwiſe. But this is no Hindrance to our being cheerful and pleaſant at other Times, and on proper Occaſions. It is Superſtition, not Religion, that ſours Men's Tempers, and diſpoſes them to be gloomy and melancholy. True Religion has a natural Tendency to make them cheerful and eaſy: happy in themſelves, and agreeable to all about them. Indeed there is no ſuch Thing as being truly and conſtantly cheerful without it. Nor does it by any Means forbid a moderate Indulgence in innocent Recreations and Amuſements. *There is a Time for all Things:* and the ſame Perſon may be at one Time ſerious; and yet very calm and eaſy; and at another Time cheerful, and yet very innocent. Let me only intreat you to make the Trial, and be aſſured you will find by Experience, that the more truly religious you are, you will be ſo much the more comfortable and happy; and that the oftener you go to Church, and receive the Sacrament with Piety and Devotion, the more you will be diſpoſed to enjoy every Comfort, every innocent Pleaſure of this Life, with a rational Cheerfulneſs and grateful Satisfaction. I conclude

clude all with the Words of the inspired Preacher, who, speaking of Wisdom or Religion, tells us; HER WAYS ARE WAYS OF PLEASANTNESS, AND ALL HER PATHS ARE PEACE. Prov. iii. 17.

CHAP VI.

Directions for a devout Behaviour at Church, and particularly at the Holy Communion; with some Remarks on the Communion Service.

ONE general Rule to be observed in all Affairs we are concerned in, whether of a religious Nature or not, is, to mind what we are about; to attend closely and diligently to that, and that only. The Usefulness and Necessity of this Rule in the common Business of Life, is allowed by every one. Now as Religion is doubtless the most important Concern of all Men, the Duties of it certainly demand our peculiar Care and Attention. Whenever therefore we worship God, either in private or public, we should endeavour to keep our Minds wholly attentive to the solemn Work we are employed in, and entirely disengaged from all worldly Thoughts whatsoever. Particularly, when we go to Church, we should consider before-hand, that we are going to enjoy the greatest Honour and Happiness this World

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can afford; that of being admitted into the more immediate Presence of Almighty God; into the Palace of the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. We should consider too very seriously the End of our going thither, and the great Concern of our Souls in the Business we are there to be engaged in; that we are to confess and bewail our manifold Sins and Transgressions to that Being, who alone can help us; to implore his Pardon for what is past, and the gracious Assistance of his Holy Spirit, to amend our Lives for the future; to thank and praise him for all the Blessings we have already received, or do now enjoy, or hope for; and, above all, for the Redemption of the World by our Lord Jesus Christ: humbly beseeching him that we may receive the Benefit of it in an happy Immortality. Having our Minds duly impressed with these Reflections before-hand, we must be careful not to let them slip during our Stay at Church; but to keep both our Eyes and Thoughts from wandering; and let our Behaviour throughout be serious, attentive, and devout. The excellent Service of our Church, is most admirably fitted to help us in maintaining a Spirit of true Piety and rational Devotion; and the Rules it prescribes, as to our outward Behaviour, are no less proper, and ought to be carefully observed; I mean, not only in regard to kneeling or standing, as we are there directed, but also in another Particular of no small Consequence, and yet much neglected,

neglected, that of repeating, or not, the several Parts of the Service after the Minister. The Confession and the Lord's Prayer the whole Congregation is to join in; as in the Litany and some other Parts they are to take their Share, as directed: yet not so loudly as to disturb and confound one another, but (as the Exhortation enjoins) with an "humble," or low "Voice;" which will naturally accompany "an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient Heart." But as to the Prayers in general, it is the Minister's Business to offer them up singly; and the People should attend to them silently, making them their own by saying an hearty Amen (which signifies *so be it*) at the End of each. This is much more decent and proper, than a Custom some Persons have of repeating every Prayer after the Minister: for you may pray very fervently and devoutly with your Hearts, without opening your Lips: nay, I am persuaded, much more so, if you do not keep your Attention fixed to what you are about. The common Service being ended, next follows the Sermon; which you should carefully attend to, as being an Explanation of the Word of God, and intended to instruct you both in Matters of Faith and Practice. Instead therefore of criticizing and making your Remarks upon the Preacher (as the Manner of too many is) you should endeavour to profit and improve by his Discourse; as you certainly may, if it is not your own Fault.

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And now to come to the laſt and moſt material Part of all, the Communion Service; than which nothing ſurely was ever better calculated for the Purpoſe of true Devotion; being wonderfully expreſſive of all that Humility, Penitence, Faith, Gratitude, and Charity, which ſhould fill the Breaſt of every devout Communicant. Be careful then to come to it with ſuch good Diſpoſitions, praying earneſtly to Almighty God to keep them freſh in your Minds; and by his Grace, and your own ſtrict Attention to the Office of the Church, you will not fail to perform this Duty acceptably to him, and to your own great Benefit and Comfort. If you join heartily and ſincerely in the common Service, you will find this an excellent Help towards keeping your Minds properly diſpoſed for that of the Communion. In both you ſhould avoid all Coldneſs and Indifference on the one Hand; and on the other, you ſhould not aim at any violent Emotions, or rapturous Heights of Devotion; but rather endeavour to preſerve an even regular Piety; and if you are ſincere and attentive, ſome Warmth and Earneſtneſs will naturally follow. The main Point is, to be deeply affected with a Senſe of your own Unworthineſs, and of God's great Goodneſs in appointing, and our bleſſed Redeemer's Mercy in giving himſelf, a Sacrifice for our Sins. Theſe and ſuch-like Meditations ſhould be more or leſs our daily Employment, but particularly when we are

about

about to partake of the Memorials of our Redemption at God's holy Table.—The Service of our Church (that Part of it, I mean, in which the Communicants alone are concerned) begins with the Offertory, or a Collection for the Poor, in Imitation of a very ancient and laudable Practice; Almsgiving being a very proper Attendant on Prayer in general, and more especially on this solemn Ordinance. Several Sentences of Scripture are now read, to excite us to this Branch of Christian Charity, which we should seriously attend to; giving according to our Abilities, and always remembering what the Word of God assures us of, that *He that giveth unto the Poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and what he layeth out, it shall be paid him again.*

We are in the next Place called upon to exercise another Part of Christian Love or Charity, in praying for the whole State of Christ's Church *militant* here on Earth. The Word *militant*, signifies being in warfare: and is applied to the present State of the Church in this Life, on account of its being exposed to many Dangers and Difficulties, and having many Enemies and Temptations to strive and contend with; which those good Christians who shall have overcome, having fought the good Fight, shall become Members of the Church *triumphant* in Heaven.

In this excellent and comprehensive Prayer, we first beg God's gracious Acceptance of our

Alms, and of our Prayers in general, particularly of those we are now going to offer up to him. We then pray for the whole Church of Christ; that all Members of it may live in true Faith, and constant Obedience to their great Master; and in Unity and godly Love one with another. In the next Place, according to the Scripture Rule, we pray for all Christian Kings, Princes and Governors; especially for our own most gracious Sovereign, and such as are in Authority under him; "that they may truly and *indifferently* (that is "*impartially*,) minister Justice, &c." Then follows a Petition for the Clergy, "that they "may both by their Life and Doctrine answer the great End of their Appointment: and lastly, for the People in general, and for those now assembled in particular; that God would bestow on us the greatest of all Blessings here on Earth, his spiritual Grace, to prepare and qualify us for his Kingdom in Heaven. We then recommend to his Pity and Mercy all that are in Want or Affliction; thanking him for having released such of his faithful Servants as are departed from the Miseries of this Life, and beseeching him to enable us to follow their Example, that so we may be for ever happy with them in the Life to come.—Before I proceed, permit me to make one Remark on this Prayer, which may be applied to our Prayers in general, and particularly to those of our Church; which is this—(I will give it you

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in the Words of the admirable Bishop *Taylor*) "Let every Man study his Prayers, and read "his Duty in his Petitions."—Prayer is undoubtedly a Duty *in itself*, without considering it in Reference to any other: but it is also highly useful, as it tends to keep up in our Minds a just Sense of our Duty in general both to God and Man; and it must be our constant Endeavour, if we would have our Prayers heard, to regulate our Behaviour according to what we pray for. To instance in the Prayer now before us; we pray that all Christians may "live in Unity and godly "Love." Now if at the same Time they live in Enmity, Strife, Variance, Revenge, or any other uncharitable Disposition, is not this prevaricating with God? Is it not downright Hypocrisy? Do we not stand self-condemned? How careful then should we be, that our Hearts and Lives correspond with our Petitions, and that we be shining Examples of that Unity and godly Love, which we pray may prevail universally!—So likewise when we pray for our gracious King, and all that are in Authority under him, how should this inspire us with the warmest Sentiments of Duty and Loyalty to him, and of Obedience to our Governors in general; and make us detest and abhor, not only the heinous Sin of Rebellion, but every Species of Faction or Disaffection, which tends to the Confusion of all Order and Decency, and the Scandal of our holy Profession? Our blessed

blessed Saviour and his Apostles, both by their Precepts and Examples, enjoined the strictest Obedience to the higher Powers, even when they were Heathens and Persecutors of the Christian Faith; and shall not we pay the same Obedience to our Rulers, who are the Guardians and Defenders of it? If we believe the Scriptures, nothing is more clear than that we cannot be good Christians, if we are not good Subjects.

But to return from this Digression—After the Prayer for the Church militant, follows an Exhortation (the third in our Prayer-book) full of excellent Instruction, which demands our most serious Attention. It is designed to shew us the great Benefits of receiving the Sacrament worthily, and wherein such a worthy Receiving consists; and also the Danger of receiving it unworthily, and the sure Way to avoid it. All this has been so fully explained to you in the foregoing Chapters, that I need not, I presume, say any Thing more on the Subject in this Place. You have been told what Qualifications are necessary to make you worthy Communicants; if you come with these, you cannot fail to reap all the Benefits, and escape the Danger, here mentioned. Be not therefore terrified or alarmed at hearing this Exhortation; but proceed, as it goes on to direct you, "to give most humble and hearty "Thanks to God, the Father, the Son, and "the Holy Ghost, for their amazing Love

"to Mankind in the Redemption of the "World by our Saviour Christ, both God "and Man." Lift up your Hearts, with the warmest Gratitude, and most affectionate Devotion, to your Creator, your Redeemer, and Sanctifier, by whom you have been saved from Death and Misery, and made capable of eternal Life and Happiness. And, in particular, thank your gracious Redeemer for his infinite Condescension and Love in taking our Nature upon him, and submitting to a cruel and ignominious Death for our Sakes; and also for a further Instance of his Kindness, in appointing these Memorials of his Death and Sufferings, and Pledges of his Love, "to our "great and endless Comfort." You must likewise stedfastly resolve and promise "to submit yourselves wholly to his holy Will and "Pleasure, studying to serve him in true Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of your "Life." And to shew that we join heartily in these Resolutions and Thanksgivings, we are directed to say, Amen, at the End of this Exhortation.—Then follows a shorter one, reckoning up in few Words, the Qualifications requisite for a worthy Communicant, and directing us to join humbly and devoutly in that excellent Confession, which comes next to be considered, and which we are to repeat after the Minister.

As an humble penitent Heart, deeply affected with a sense of our Unworthiness, and

Sorrow

Sorrow for our Sins, is the first Thing needful to make our Devotions acceptable to our offended God; so they should always begin with an expression of that Humility and Sorrow in an humble Confession. This therefore is very properly made the first Part of the common Service of our Church, and is so material an one, that we should always take Care to come in Time to join in it. The Communion-Service being distinct from the rest, and requiring the deepest Humility, and most unfeigned Repentance, in all that attend it, we are here with the greatest Reason called upon to renew our Confession, and bewail our Sins again, in that most admirable Form now before us; which is so plain, so full, so expressive, that I think you cannot fail to understand it. Let me only advise you to make it the frequent Subject of your Meditations, by reading it often over, and considering every Part of it carefully in private; and then you will be the more ready to use it properly and devoutly in public. When the Minister begins, be sure you attend with more than ordinary Devotion, repeating every Word after him slowly and distinctly. Consider yourself as a grievous Sinner, unworthy of the least of God's Mercies, and yet going to partake of the greatest. Consider who it is you have offended; "the Maker of all Things, and Judge "of all Men;" that Almighty Being, who can punish his guilty Creatures with instant Destruction,

Destruction, or everlasting Misery, which as Sinners we justly deserve. But consider him too as the God of Mercy, as well as Justice; the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" who of his infinite Goodness has sent his Son to die for our Sins, and reconcile us to his offended Majesty. Reflect then on the heinous Nature of Sin in general, and on your own Sins in particular, "which you from Time to Time "most grievously have committed." Think what base Ingratitude you have been guilty of to your heavenly Father, your greatest Friend and Benefactor; and what a Return you have made for all his Mercy and Goodness. Think in what a Variety of Ways you have offended him, "by Thought, Word, and Deed, "provoking most justly his Wrath and Indig-"nation against you." And if you are conscious of any particular Sins you have more than usual offended in, bewail these with particular Earnestness and Sorrow.—In the Words of the Confession (which surely are but too applicable to the very best of us) we must "earnestly repent, and be heartily sorry for these, "and all, our Misdoings; the Remembrance "of them must grievous unto us, and the "Burthen of them intolerable."

Thus self-convicted of our Guilt, obnoxious to the Wrath and Punishment of that God who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, and utterly unable of ourselves to do any Thing to appease his Anger, or avert his Judgments;

we can only throw ourſelves upon his Mercy, however undeſerving—" Have Mercy upon " us, have Mercy upon us, moſt merciful Fa- " ther!"—But how ſhall we dare to expect, or even aſk, for, that Mercy, to which we can have no title of ourſelves, after our repeated Tranſgreſſions?—Through Chriſt we may ſtill expect and ſue for it, and if it be not our own Fault, ſhall moſt certainly obtain it. Let us therefore devoutly go on, in full Aſſurance of Faith; " For thy Son, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt's Sake, forgive us all that is paſt."—But as it is in vain to lament, or aſk Forgiveneſs of, our paſt Sins, without reſolving to avoid them for the future; and as the beſt Reſolutions and Endeavours of us frail Mortals would be weak and ineffectual without the gracious Aſſiſtance of God's Holy Spirit; we in the laſt Place, humbly implore this in the following Words; " Grant that we may ever hereafter ſerve and " pleaſe thee in Newneſs of Life, to the Ho- " nour and Glory of thy Name, through " Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen."

Now follows the Abſolution; the Delivery of which is a peculiar Part of the Prieſt's Office, to be pronounced by him alone, ſtanding, the People ſtill kneeling. It is here in a ſomewhat different Form from that uſed in the Common Service; but the Deſign is the ſame in both; to wit, to aſſure us of God's Pardon, on Condition of our true Faith and ſincere Repentance. To give you as clear a Notion of

this Matter as I can. The Word *Abſolution* ſignifies properly a ſetting looſe, or Deliverance; and is here to be underſtood in the ſame Senſe as Pardon, or the delivering of us from the Bondage, the Guilt, and Puniſhment of Sin. We are all by Nature vile Sinners, and by our actual Tranſgreſſions Rebels againſt the great King and Lord of the Univerſe, and utterly unworthy of his Mercy and Forgiveneſs: which however he has graciouſly promiſed us, for the Sake of his dear Son, on Condition of our Faith and Repentance. Now this Pardon, or Act of Grace, is proclaimed and delivered to us by the Prieſt, as God's Herald or Miniſter, agreeably to the Commiſſion given by Chriſt to his Apoſtles, and thence derived to the Chriſtian Prieſthood in all future Ages: and we are to conſider it as coming from God himſelf, who alone can forgive Sins. The Prieſt has no ſuch Power; neither indeed can he apply God's Pardon, abſolutely or diſcretionally, to any particular Perſon, or Perſons; becauſe he cannot ſee into the Heart, nor conſequently know who is qualified to receive it, and who not. It is ſufficient for us, and ſhould afford us the greateſt Comfort, to be aſſured that God, to whom all Hearts are open, will undoubtedly confirm and ratify this Pardon to all ſuch as he ſees fit for it; that is, to all ſincere Penitents and true Believers. The Abſolution now before us is in the Form of a Prayer, addreſſed to God by the Prieſt only,

on our Behalf, and is therefore very different from other Prayers, which are the joint Petitions of the Minister and Congregation: so that for us to join in this, or repeat it after him, would be highly absurd. We are indeed the Persons interested in it, and should attend to it most seriously and devoutly; declaring our Assent by an hearty Amen! which is as much as to say; "Vouchsafe, O merciful God, to "hear the Prayer of thy Minister, now offered "up for thy unworthy Servants, who have "confessed our Sins unto thee; and grant, "upon our true Repentance, that this Pardon "may remain with us now and for evermore, "for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord." I do not mean that we are to repeat these Words after the Absolution (which the Time would not permit) but only that when we say Amen after it, which we ought to do most heartily, we should lift up our Souls to God in such Thoughts as these Words express.—The Priest, having thus prayed for our Pardon, and as it were proclaimed it to us from the Throne of Grace, proceeds to give us still stronger Assurance of it in the Words of Truth itself; reading four Sentences of Scripture, which contain the very Charter of our Salvation, "Hear "(says he) what comfortable Words our Sa-"viour Christ saith unto all that truly turn to "him; *Come unto me, all that travel, and are* "*heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*" Matt. xi. 28.—Words of Comfort indeed! which speak

Peace

Peace to the afflicted Soul, labouring under the Burthen of its Sins. Let us then, with Hearts full of Joy and Gratitude, accept this gracious Invitation of our blessed Redeemer, whose *Yoke is easy and whose Burthen is light.* Let us go unto him in full Assurance of Faith, trusting to his Merits for the Pardon of our past Sins, and resolving to forsake them, and to live henceforth as becomes the Redeemed of the Lord.—Again: "*God so loved the* " *World, that he gave his only begotten Son, to* " *the End that all that believe in him should not* " *perish, but have everlasting Life.*" John iii. 16.—Amazing Love, to rescue us from eternal Misery, and raise us to everlasting Life! Us, who were guilty Sinners and Enemies to God, unworthy of the least of his Favours. Behold! God manifest in the Flesh! Behold him dying on the Cross, to save us from Ruin, and make us for ever happy with himself in Heaven! His Words are true: his Promises are sure: Let us believe, obey, and be thankful.

Next follows a Passage from St. Paul— " *This is a true Saying, and worthy of all Men* " *to be received, that Christ Jesus came into the* " *World to save Sinners.*" 1 Tim. i. 15. Let us all, with the firmest Faith and most hearty Gratitude, receive, and treasure up in our Hearts, this true saying, delivered to us from the Holy Spirit of Truth itself; admiring the Love and Condescension of Him, who, being

God, submitted to become *Man* for our Sakes; who left the Bosom of his Father, the Regions of Bliss and Glory, to undergo the Miseries of a painful Life, and a cruel ignominious Death, for the Salvation of us his sinful Creatures. Let us ever adore his Goodness, and rejoice with Joy unspeakable; submitting ourselves in all Things to his Will and Pleasure, and studying to serve him in true Holiness all the Days of our Life."

The fourth and last Sentence is taken from S John—"*If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.*" 1 John ii. 1, 2.—And what Man is there that liveth and sinneth not?—None surely. Both Scripture and Experience teach us this sad Truth, that we are guilty Offenders. But though *we* are *sinful*, *he* is *righteous*; though *we* have no Merits of *our own* to plead, *our Saviour's* we may plead most effectually.—He is our Advocate in Heaven, and will plead our Cause for us, and the Success of his Pleading we cannot doubt of. Trusting therefore in his Merits, let us with hearty Repentance, and firm Resolutions of future Obedience, *return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon us, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Is. iv. 7.

Such Reflections as these must naturally arise in the Breast of every one that comes properly disposed

difpofed to receive the Holy Communion, and attends devoutly to the Sentences above recited; than which none could have been chofen more fit to fill our Minds with humble Confidence in God's mercy, with joyful Gratitude, and pious Adoration.

The Prieft now bids us, "Lift up our "Hearts." Let us, with the utmoft Sincerity, make Anfwer, "We lift them up unto the "Lord." He then goes on; "Let us give "Thanks unto our Lord God." Let us joyfully reply, "It is meet and right fo to do."—And now, having our Thoughts fixed on Heaven, and our Hearts filled with devout Affections and Gratitude, let us attend to the Prieft, while he addreffes Almighty God at his holy Table, in that folemn Form of Thankfgiving, "It is very meet, right, and our bounden "Duty, that we fhould, at all Times, and in "all Places, give Thanks unto thee, O Lord, "holy Father, Almighty, everlafting God." (Here we may fecretly fay, Amen.) After which, on particular Feftivals, follows a Preface fuitable to the Occafion, which the Minifter is to repeat alone, the People attending. And then let us all, both with Heart and Voice, join in that moft noble and heavenly Hymn of Praife and Thankfgiving, in which we, that now dwell on Earth, unite our Praifes with the Inhabitants of Heaven; and which God grant we may all fing together in thofe Manfions of Joy and Glory, to all Eternity!

" Therefore, with Angels and Archangels, and " with all the Company of Heaven, we laud " and magnify thy glorious Name, evermore " praising thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, " Lord God of Hosts! Heaven and Earth " are full of thy Glory. Glory be to Thee, O " Lord most high." In this sublime Hymn, we laud or praise God under the Title of *Lord God of Hosts*, (or *Armies*) which is often given him in holy Scripture, to denote his Sovereignty, as Creator and Lord of the Universe; from whom the innumerable Hosts of Angels, as well as all other Creatures, derive their Being, and on whom they entirely depend. And we praise him under the *triple* Appellation of *Holy*, to signify the Holiness and Purity of his Nature (for " He only is Holy") and in Acknowledgment of the Mystery of the *Holy Trinity*, or of three Persons in one God, revealed to us by the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Into this Faith we have been all baptized; in the Name of these three divine Persons we all received our Blessing at the End of our public Devotions; and in the Hymn we are now considering, we praise and adore the same ever-blessed God, our Creator, and Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and in all three Instances, (which I beg you to take particular Notice of) we use the Words of Scripture itself. Whoever therefore denies the Doctrine of the Trinity, would do well to consider that he thereby denies the Word of God; does in Effect

Effect renounces his Baptism; and forfeits his Title to that Blessing, which God alone can bestow, and which he has commanded us to receive in the Name of the same three divine Persons in which we are by the same Authority baptized. Let us all pray to God, that he would "keep us stedfast in this Faith," till we join the Host of Angels and the Church triumphant, in singing Praises to the thrice Holy in Heaven.—But to proceed in the Communion Service.

Lest, after having sung the Song of Angels, we should forget that we are sinful Men, and fancy ourselves in any Sense worthy of the Blessings we are called to partake of, our Church has wisely provided the following admirable Form of Humiliation, wherein we acknowledge our own Unworthiness, and declare our intire Trust in God's Mercy for Acceptance. The Priest begins (and let us all, with humble and contrite Hearts, devoutly, though jointly, join him,) "We do not presume to come to this thy Table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own Righteousness, but in thy manifold and great Mercies." Alas! we have no Righteousness of our own; our best Deeds are of themselves as *filthy Rags:* It is thy blessed Spirit alone that can lead us in the Way of Holiness, and the Merits of thy Son that must make our imperfect Services well-pleasing in thy Sight.—Merit we can have none—We therefore disclaim all Trust in our-

felves, a l Self-Righteoufnefs: and humbly proftrate ourfelves before thee, relying wholly on thy Mercy and Goodnefs, and crying out with the Publican in the Gofpel, *Lord, be merciful unto us, Sinners!*—" We are not worthy " fo much as to gather up the Crumbs under " thy Table."—So far from being worthy of the high Honour, and ineftimable Privilege, of being admitted as Guefts at thy holy Table, we acknowledge ourfelves unworthy even of picking-up the Crumbs that fall from it. *The Wages of Sin is Death*, and we all, as vile Sinners, deferve it. Yet, O gracious Lord, thou feedeft us with the Bread of Life, and giveft us to drink of the Cup of Immortality. —" Thou art the fame Lord, whofe Pro- " perty is, always to have Mercy." As thy Nature is unchangeable, fo is thy Goodnefs. Before Man had finned, thou hadft provided a Ranfom; and no fooner did he rebel, than thou didft declare thy gracious Promife of Pardon, through Him who was to *bruife the Serpent's Head.* Lo! thou art ftill the fame: the Promifed Seed is long fince come; the Lamb is flain; and we fall down before thine Altar to partake of the bleffed Sacrifice, provided for our Redemption.—" Grant us there- " fore, gracious Lord, fo to eat the Flefh " of thy dear Son Jefus Chrift, and to drink " his Blood, that our finful Bodies may be " made clean by his Body, and our Souls " wafhed through his moft precious Blood;

" and

"and that we may evermore dwell in him, "and he in us, Amen."—Receive therefore, O Lord, the humble Supplications of thy unworthy Servants; and grant that we, by partaking of this Bread and Wine, may so spiritually, and through Faith, partake of his blessed Body and Blood, that we may thereby be cleansed from all Filthiness of the Flesh and Spirit; and that, having his Grace dwelling in our Hearts, we may be happily united with him now, henceforth, and for ever.

I have now, I hope, given you the full Sense and Meaning of this excellent Prayer, and suggested such Thoughts, as I think it must naturally raise in your Minds, if you attend to it as you ought. How short, and yet how complete a Form is it of true Christian Humiliation! How wonderfully contrived to subdue every proud and presumptuous Thought, to inspire us with humble Devotion, and so to prepare us for that heavenly Feast, which we are going to partake of.

Next follows the Prayer of Consecration; the Design of which is, to beg God's Blessing on the Elements of Bread and Wine; that by the Operation of his Holy Spirit, he would be pleased to make them, to all faithful Receivers, in a spiritual Sense, the Body and Blood of Christ; that is, in other Words, that they may be a Means of conveying to us the Benefits of the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross, which they are appointed to represent. In

this one most important and comprehensive Petition the whole Prayer centers; "that we "receiving these thy Creatures of Bread and "Wine, according to thy Son, our Saviour "Jesus Christ's holy Institution, in Remem-"brance of his Death and Passion, may be "Partakers of his most blessed Body and "Blood;"—That, while we only see the Shadow, we may by Faith receive the Substance; and while we only eat and drink the Signs or Memorials, we may partake of the Reality of those Blessings which they point out to us. And let us not doubt, but earnestly believe, that God will graciously hear this our devout Supplication; and that the same divine Power, which in Baptism sanctifies Water to the washing away of Sin, can, and will, consecrate these his Creatures of Bread and Wine, to be the Means of imparting to us all spiritual Graces, and other Benefits of Christ's Death and Passion. Here then let us secretly say, Amen; and while the Priest goes on with the Consecration in the Words of Scripture, let us fix our Thoughts on our Blessed Saviour, instituting this holy Sacrament just before he died for us; and lift up our Hearts in humble Gratitude and Adoration to him, who was slain and hath redeemed us to God by his most precious Blood. Let us, at the same time, though silently, beg of God, that he would send his Holy Spirit on the Bread and Wine, now consecrating for our Use; and

when the Miniſter hath finiſhed, let us heartily and devoutly ſay, Amen.

The following Prayers, I think, are the beſt that can be uſed, while the Miniſter and others are receiving. The firſt is taken from *Wilſon*, the other from *Gibſon*; both once excellent Prelates of our Church.

Let me adviſe you to ſay them ſoftly, ſlowly, and deliberately; carefully conſidering every Sentence as you go along.

" That I am invited to the Table, is not
" becauſe I am worthy, but becauſe thou, O
" God, art infinitely good and kind. Pity
" my Infirmities, which are known to thee,
" and accept of my imperfect Obedience to
" this Command. I acknowledge my Un-
" worthineſs: I place all my Hopes in thy
" Mercy and Promiſes, in Jeſus Chriſt. I
" ſincerely purpoſe to lead a Chriſtian Life,
" and to uſe all Diligence to make my Call-
" ing and Election ſure. With theſe Pur-
" poſes I go to thine Altar, truſting in thy
" Goodneſs for the Pardon of my Defects, and
" for an Increaſe of all thoſe Graces that are
" neceſſary to make me more worthy to eat
" of that Bread, and drink of that Cup.

" I behold by Faith my crucified Lord
" dying for me; and as my only Saviour and
" Redeemer, I adore and worſhip him. O
" Lord! increaſe and enliven my Faith; and
" grant that through his Merits, who died
" and roſe again for me, I may receive the

"Remiſſion of my Sins, and the comfortable "Aſſiſtance of thy Holy Spirit."

If the Communion is large, and the Space long before you go to the Altar, you may lengthen out your Devotions in other Prayers ſuitable to this Solemnity; many of which are to be found in ſundry Treatiſes on this Subject. But I muſt own, I ſee no Neceſſity for employing the whole Time in actual Prayer. Let us remember, that God regards the Sincerity of the Heart much more than the Length of our Petitions. The main Point is, to keep our Minds employed in pious and ſuitable Meditations, which a devout Communicant can never be at a Loſs for. Sorrow for our Sins, hearty Reſolutions of Amendment, and earneſt Deſire of God's Grace, and Faith in his Mercy through Chriſt, will afford us ample Matter for this Purpoſe.

Thus then let us employ our Thoughts till we go to the holy Table; and there let us fix them on our bleſſed Redeemer, dying for our Sins. When the Miniſter, as God's Steward, draws near you with the conſecrated Bread, attend with all poſſible Devotion to the Prayer he offers up for you in theſe Words: "The "Body of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which was "given for thee, preſerve thy Body and Soul "unto everlaſting Life!" Here ſay with a low Voice, Amen! lifting up your Heart to God in earneſt Prayer, that it may be unto you according to theſe Words, a Seal of your Pardon,

Pardon, and a Pledge of your Salvation. "Take and eat the Bread, in Remembrance "that Christ died for thee, and feed on him "in thy Heart, by Faith, with Thanksgiv-"ing." When the Cup is brought to you, keep your Thoughts fixed, as before, on your merciful Redeemer, shedding his Blood for you; attend to the Minister, as you did when he brought the Bread, the Prayer being in Effect the same, and say Amen, after the Words "everlasting Life." Then take the Cup, and drink very moderately of the consecrated Wine; "in Remembrance that Christ's "Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful." Then say secretly, "May the Blood of Christ "cleanse me from all Sin! Blessing, Honour, "Glory, Thanksgiving, and Power be unto "God, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever! "Amen." Now retire from the Altar, to make Room for others; and when you are returned to your Pew, kneel down, and offer up some such Thanksgiving as the following.

"Praise the Lord! O my Soul, and all that "is within me bless his holy Name! Praise "the Lord! O my Soul, and forget not all "his Benefits; who forgiveth all thine Ini-"quities, and healeth all thy Diseases: who "redeemeth thy Life from Destruction, and "crowneth thee with loving Kindness, and "tender Mercies. What shall I render unto "thee for all thy undeserved Goodness, and "for these comfortable Pledges of thy Par-

"don and Favour, which I have received at "thy holy Table? Accept, O Lord, the Of- "fering of a thankful Heart, and the sincerest "Desires and Resolutions to please thee. I "have sworn, and am stedfastly purposed, to "keep thy righteous Judgments. O hold "thou up my Goings in thy Paths, that my "Footsteps slip not, and grant that by the "Help of thy Grace I may so love and obey "thee in this Life, that in the World to come "I may have Life everlasting, through the "Merits of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, my "only Saviour and Redeemer.

This, or some such Act of Devotion, may very properly be used, provided there is Time for it before the Post-Communion begins; but by no Means otherwise. For let me beg of you to remember once for all, that your private Prayers should never interfere with the Service of the Church, which is much more edifying and important.

The Moment therefore the Minister begins the Lord's Prayer, after all have communicated, be sure you lay aside all other Books and Devotions, and join fervently with him, in Heart and Voice, in that truly divine Composition, which is here used with great Propriety, to make our imperfect Prayers acceptable.

In the Prayer next following, we first humbly beseech our heavenly Father, "mercifully "to accept this our Sacrifice of Praise and "Thanksgiving."

"Thankfgiving." A very proper and neceffary Petition for us finful Creatures, who, confcious of our Unworthinefs, and of the Imperfection of our beft Services, muft truft wholly to the all-fufficient Sacrifice of Chrift upon the Crofs to render this Sacrifice of our's acceptable at the Throne of Grace.

We then proceed to enlarge our Supplications for the whole Chriftian Church; that we, and all other Members of the fame may, "*by* "the Merits and Death of Chrift, and *through* "Faith in his Blood, obtain Remiffion of our "Sins, and all other Benefits of his Paffion." This is expreffed with great Accuracy and Exactnefs; to fhew that our Pardon and Salvation are entirely owing to his Merits and Death, as the only Caufe thereof, and that Faith is the Inftrument whereby we apply thofe Bleffings to ourfelves: For neither our Faith nor good Works have any Merit, nor can give us any Claim to Pardon, though they are indeed indifpenfably neceffary, as Conditions of our obtaining it.

In the next Place, we go on to a very material Part of our Chriftian Sacrifice, wherein "We offer up ourfelves, our Souls, and Bo-"dies to Almighty God, as a reafonable, holy, "and lively Sacrifice unto him." The Meaning of which is, that we devote and dedicate ourfelves entirely to his Service; promifing (as the Scripture expreffes it) that we, who *are Chrift's, will crucify the Flefh, with the Affections*

fections and Lusts—that we will *mortify our Members which are upon the Earth*; that is, subdue all our irregular Appetites, and forsake all Sin and Wickedness; living from henceforth as becomes the Redeemed of the Lord.

This is that *living* and *holy* Sacrifice the Apostle speaks of, (Rom. xii. 1.) without which all other Sacrifices will avail us nothing. And that we may offer it effectually, and be enabled to keep the solemn Vows of Obedience we now make to God, we go on to pray, "that all we, who are Partakers of "this Holy Communion, may be fulfilled with "his Grace and heavenly Benediction;" without which all our best Endeavours would be vain, and our most solemn Resolutions ineffectual.—The Prayer concludes with a humble Acknowledgement of our Unworthiness, to offer unto God any Sacrifice, and an earnest Request that he will be pleased, nevertheless, to "accept this our bounden Duty and Service, not weighing our Merits, but pardon-"ing our Offences, through Jesus Christ our "Lord;" by whom as our Mediator we ascribe all Honour and Glory to the "Father "Almighty, in Unity with the Son and Holy "Ghost, World without End."

The other Prayer, which is very seldom used, consists of a Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the Privileges and Benefits we have been made Partakers of at his holy Table; and

and a Petition for his Grace, "that we may "continue in that holy Fellowſhip, and do "all ſuch good Works as he has prepared for "us to walk in."—From both Prayers we may learn this important Leſſon, which ſhould never be out of our Mouths; that the Benefit of our communicating to ourſelves, as well as its Acceptance with God, depends entirely on our future Obedience in a Life of Virtue and Holineſs. For this End, we beg the gracious Aſſiſtance of his good Spirit, which will never be wanting to thoſe who ſincerely pray for it, and uſe the appointed Means to obtain it. But though without this we can do nothing, yet, in order to grow in Grace, we muſt join our own hearty Endeavours to the divine Power within us; conſtantly ſtriving to avoid every Sin, and to improve in the Practice of every Virtue. It is true, that we can never arrive at Perfection in all, or in any Part of our Duty in this ſinful State; but we muſt be always aiming at it; and, if it be not our own Fault, we may, by God's Help, make a great Progreſs towards it. However, let us not be diſcouraged, if we do not find ſo quick and ſudden a Change in our Minds, or ſo thorough a Reformation in our Lives, as we could wiſh, immediately after receiving the Sacrament. Let us only be ſincere and hearty in our Application to God for his Grace, and go on in a regular and uniform Courſe of Obedience to his Will, to the ut-

moſt of our Power, and we need not fear the Event. *He is faithful that hath promiſed*, and *will never leave or forſake* thoſe who put their Truſt in his Mercy.

In purſuance of the Example of our bleſſed Saviour, who, after he had finiſhed his laſt Supper with his Diſciples, ſung an Hymn, the Church now directs us to join in that admirable one at the End of the Communion Service, wherein we ſing Praiſes to God and to the Lamb, in the moſt ſublime Strains of Rapture and Adoration. It begins with the very Words the Angels uſed, when they firſt brought the glad Tidings of our Redemption, at our Saviour's Birth; *Praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory to God in the higheſt, and on Earth Peace, Good Will towards Men.* Luke ii. 13, 14.

Thus did thoſe bleſſed Spirits celebrate the divine Mercies, which Man was to receive: and ſurely we can never more properly join the heavenly Hoſt in this Hymn of Adoration, than when we have been entertained with that heavenly Food at the Lord's Table. What they ſaw and celebrated before-hand is now accompliſhed; ſo that we may with a peculiar Propriety ſing Praiſe and Glory to "God "in the Higheſt," who has, by ſending his Son to die for us, made "Peace on Earth," and ſhewn his "Good Will towards Men."

We then proceed to praiſe and thank him in a variety of Words admirably choſen both to

to excite and express our warmest Gratitude, and most devout Adoration.

In the next Place, we address ourselves to the blessed Jesus; invoking him as our Redeemer, our Mediator, and Advocate; earnestly imploring his Mercy, and begging him to receive our Prayers: "For thou only art "holy"—in and from thyself—Thou art the Fountain of Holiness, whence it must be derived to all created Beings.—"Thou only art "the Lord"—Thou art by Nature, as well as Office—*King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*— "Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, "art most high in the Glory of God the "Father."

Thus ends this excellent Hymn (composed chiefly of Passages from Scripture) with an Acknowledgement of the Glory of the eternal Trinity; to whom be ascribed all Honour, Praise, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, by the Church throughout all Ages. Amen!

Immediately after this Hymn, is commonly used one of those six Collects which are placed in our Prayer-Book after the Blessing. They are all very excellent in their Kind, and extremely proper to conclude our Devotions with; and are withal so plain and intelligible, as to need no Explanation. I shall therefore proceed to the Blessing, which closes the whole Service.

It has been the constant Custom in all religious Assemblies, both before and since the Coming

Coming of Chriſt, for the Congregation to be diſmiſſed by a ſolemn Bleſſing from the Prieſt. Under the Law there was one appointed by God himſelf, to be uſed after the daily Sacrifice; which was much the ſame in Subſtance, though in different Words, with what we uſe under the Goſpel, after this our Sacrifice of Praiſe and Thankſgiving. In regard to the *Delivery* of the Bleſſing, as I obſerved to you with Reſpect to the Abſolution, the Prieſt acts as the Miniſter of God; pronouncing it in his Name, and by his Authority. We are not, therefore, to think ſlightly of it, becauſe it is uttered by a frail Mortal like ourſelves; but to receive it with all poſſible Reverence and Thankfulneſs as coming from God himſelf, the Author and Giver of all good Things, who can diſpenſe them to us in what Manner, and by what Inſtruments he thinks fit. After the bleſſing under the Law, Numb. vi. 24, it is added by God, *I will bleſs them*—that is, I will confirm and make good this Bleſſing, delivered by my Servant the Prieſt, unto all ſuch as ſhall faithfully and worthily receive it. And there can be no Doubt of God's doing the ſame to us Chriſtians, when, with ſincere Faith and humble Gratitude, we receive his heavenly Benediction from the Mouth of his Miniſter under the Goſpel. The Bleſſing now before us contains, as it were, the Sum and Subſtance of all our former Petitions: the full Meaning of it I take to be this—"May the

"Peace

"Peace of God, or the Senſe and Experience "of the divine Favour and Goodneſs (the "Comfort whereof ſurpaſſes all Underſtand-"ing and Comprehenſion) keep your Hearts "and Minds ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in the "true ſaving Knowledge, and ſincere Love, "of God, and of his Son, Jeſus Chriſt our "Lord! And may the Bleſſing of God Al-"mighty, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt "(the Fountain of all Goodneſs) be now, and "remain with you, and preſerve you, both in "Body and Soul, to all Eternity!" And let all the People ſay, Amen!

You will now do well to put up ſome ſuch ſhort Petitions as the following: which may be uſed at all Times after the Service of the Church is finiſhed. "May this Bleſſing re-"main with me, and with all here preſent! "and grant, O merciful Lord, that what I "have faithfully aſked according to thy Will, "I may effectually obtain, through the Merits "of thy dear Son, Jeſus Chriſt, our Lord."

The following Prayer, moſtly taken from Biſhop *Gibſon*, is very proper to be uſed at Home, at any Time of the Day that beſt ſuits you, after you have communicated.

"Moſt gracious and merciful God, who "of thy great Goodneſs hath ſpared and pre-"ſerved me to this Day, I give thee humble "and hearty Thanks for the Opportunity I "have enjoyed of coming to thy holy Table, "and receiving the moſt comfortable Pledges "of

"of thy Pardon and Favour. Let not thy "Mercy hitherto, in giving me Space for "Repentance, encourage me to go on securely "in the Neglect of my Duty; but let the "Remembrance of thy Goodness, and of the "Vows and Resolutions I have made in thy "Presence, oblige me perpetually to watch "over my Ways, and do that which is well-"pleasing in thy Sight. My Heart is cor-"rupt, and deceitful above all Things: sanc-"tify it, I beseech Thee, by thy Holy Spirit, "and establish it for ever in the Paths of "Truth and Righteousness. Let not the "Cares and Pleasures of this world make me "forget the Things of the next; nor do thou "ever forsake me in the Hour of Temptation, "but be always my Support and Strength, "in my spiritual Warfare against the World, "the Flesh, and the Devil. Keep me, O "Lord, from all presumptuous Sins, lest "they get the Dominion over me; and more "especially from those which do most easily "beset me." (Here reflect on the Sins you are most subject to, and beg God's special Grace to guard you against them.) "The Sins, "and whatsoever else is contrary to thy holy "Laws, I will heartily endeavour to shun and "avoid: And I implore the constant Assist-"ance of thy Holy Spirit, to subdue my "Corruptions, and restrain all inordinate "Desires; to make me delight in thy Ways, "and to fill my Soul with all Christian

"Graces

" Graces and Virtues; that fo ftriving daily " againft Sin, and growing in Grace, I may " live and die in thy Favour and Obedience, " and be at length received into thy eternal " and glorious Kingdom, through the Merits " and Meditation of thy Son Jefus Chrift, my " bleffed Saviour and Redeemer. Amen."

In fome fuch Devotions as thefe, and in reading good Books at Home, we fhall certainly employ our Time very ufefully and properly, after having received the Holy Sacrament. " But this" (to ufe the Words of the aforementioned excellent Prelate) " is only " *convenient* or *neceffary*; nor is it required of " Perfons in any other Degree, than as their " Condition in the World, and their Circum- " ftances at that particular Time, will allow. " In all fuch Cafes, if Servants and others, " who have not the Command of their own " Time, cannot employ as much of it in thefe " Exercifes as they wifh and defire, they may " reft affured, that God approves and accepts " their willing Mind; provided they go on " in a fincere Refolution to avoid and forfake " Sin, and live in the fear of God, and be- " have themfelves with Confcience and Ho- " nefty, in the feveral Stations which his Pro- " vidence has appointed them."

FINIS.

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